

**THE CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

1. A method of facilitating conception of inventive concepts by an inventor, the method comprising any one or more of the following:
  - 5 (a) interviewing an inventor to identify or otherwise characterize a basic invention;
  - (b) facilitating conception of inventive elements using creative stimulus comprising how-type questions relating to the functioning of the invention identified in 1(a); and
  - (c) iterating (b)(i) to (b)(ii).
- 10 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the basic invention is identified and/or characterized by accomplishing any one or more of the following steps:
  - (a) facilitating drawing of a diagram of the basic invention;
  - (b) facilitating definition of one or more elements of the basic invention; and
  - 15 (c) facilitating definition of problem(s) solved and/or problems to be solved by the basic invention.
- 20 3. The method of claim 1 further comprising communicating to the inventors any one or more concepts selected from the group consisting of:
  - (a) concept of an invention being a function of the problem to be solved by the basic invention, the element(s) that comprise the basic invention, and how the elements are connected or interrelated;
  - (b) a ladder of abstraction;
  - (c) prior art, novelty, nonobviousness, inventive step, and bar dates;
  - (d) inventorship; and

(e) enablement and written description.

4. The method of claim 1 further comprising documenting and/or recording output of any of steps (a)-(c).

5 5. The method of claim 1 further comprising documenting and/or recording administrative information.

6. A method of “growing” a basic invention, the method comprising:

(a) identifying the basic invention;

(b) selecting a questioning theme;

10 (c) identifying an aspect of the basic invention by one or more inventors that falls within the questioning theme;

(d) identifying enhancements to the basic invention by the one or more inventors, wherein the enhancements relate to the aspect of the invention;

(e) repeating (c) – (d) one or more times for alternate aspects of the basic invention within a questioning theme; and

15 (f) repeating (b) – (e) one or more times for alternate questioning themes.

7. The method of claim 7 wherein the alternate questioning themes comprises one or more themes selected from the group consisting of:

(a) disadvantages of the basic invention;

(b) advantages of the basic invention;

20 (c) operability issue(s);

(d) other ways to solve a same problem;

(e) licensing strategies; and

(f) identification of competitors and/or competitive products.

8. The method of claim 7 further comprising prior to the “growing” of the basic invention, communicating to the inventor(s) any one or more concepts selected from the group consisting of:

5 (a) concept of an invention being a function of a problem to be solved by the basic invention, element(s) that comprise the basic invention, and how the element(s) are connected or interrelated;

(b) a ladder of abstraction;

(c) prior art, novelty, nonobviousness, inventive step, and bar dates;

10 (d) inventorship; and

(e) enablement and written description.

9. The method of claim 7 further comprising documenting and/or recording output of any of steps (a)-(f).

10. The method of claim 7 further comprising documenting and/or recording administrative information.  
15

11. A method of facilitating conception of inventive concepts by an inventor, the method comprising any one or more of the following:

(a) communicating to the inventors concepts selected from the group consisting of:

20 (i) concept of an invention being a function of a problem to be solved by the basic invention, element(s) that comprise the basic invention, and how the element(s) are connected or interrelated;

(ii) a ladder of abstraction;

(iii) prior art, novelty, nonobviousness, inventive step, and bar dates;

(iv) inventorship; and

(v) enablement and written description;

(b) defining detail of the basic invention the defining detail of the basic invention comprises any one or more of the following:

5 (i) interviewing an inventor to identify or otherwise characterize a basic invention;

(ii) facilitating conception of inventive elements using creative stimulus comprising how-type questions relating to the functioning of the invention identified in (b)(i); and

10 (iii) repeating (b)(i) to (b)(ii);

(c) growing the basic invention by a method comprising any one or more of the following steps:

(i) identifying the basic invention;

(ii) selecting a questioning theme;

15 (iii) identifying an aspect of the basic invention that falls within the questioning theme;

(iv) identifying enhancements to the basic invention by the inventor(s), wherein the enhancements relate to the aspect of the invention;

20 (v) repeating (c)(iii) – (c)(iv) one or more times for alternate aspects of the basic invention a questioning theme; and

(vi) repeating (c)(ii) – (c)(v) one or more times for alternate questioning themes;

(d) documenting and/or recording output of any of steps (b)(i)-(b)(iii) and (c)(i)-(c)(vi); and

(e) documenting and/or recording administrative information.

12. The method of claim 13 wherein the alternate questioning themes comprise one or more themes selected from the group consisting of:

(a) disadvantages of the basic invention;

5 (b) advantages of the basic invention;

(c) operability issues;

(d) other ways to solve a same problem;

(e) licensing strategies; and

(f) identification of competitors and/or competitive products.